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ABSTRACT

An experimental scheme of bilingual instruction for Finnish immigrant children at the preschool level and at the junior level of elementary school was conducted between 1972 and 1980. The aim of the project was for the children to become functionally bilingual in an educational context equivalent to that provided for Swedish children. Between 1972 and 1979, the school achievement and linguistic and general development of four groups of Finnish children were continuously studied. Initial group size varied between 11 and 15. The instructional model for the project consisted of a two-year, Finnish-speaking pre-school and a two-year junior level elementary school. The Finnish students first reading and writing instruction was in Finnish and transition to regular Swedish instruction was accomplished at the intermediate level (Grade 4). Data were obtained from Finnish and Swedish school and language tests, ability tests, teacher observations and interviews with parents. It was concluded that the program was effective in promoting functional bilingualism. Educational achievement was more related to children's social environment, background and intellectual ability than to the influence of their first language. Proficiency in Swedish was not a direct result of first-language proficiency; and instruction in the first language did not have a negative effect on proficiency in Swedish. (Author/RH)

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Title of project: Models for the bilingual instruction of immigrant children

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SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

An experimental scheme of bilingual instruction for Finnish immigrant children at pre-school level and at the junior level of elementary school was conducted between 1972 and 1980 at the Institute of Education, Lund, as part of the project "Bilingual instruction of immigrant children". The main purpose of the project was to devise for children with home languages other than Swedish an instructional model which would give them educational and developmental opportunities on a level with those enjoyed by Swedish children. The aim was for the children to become functionally billingual. The term functional bilingualism as used here implies that children not speaking Swedish as a native language can cope with various language situations in Swedish as well as children with the same aptitudes but speaking Swedish as their first language. At the same time these immigrant children must have sufficient command of their first language to be able to cope well in surroundings where that language is used and also to have the cultural and linguistic potential for a possible return to their country of origin.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Between 1972 and 1979, four groups of Finnish children were continuously studied with regard to their school achievement and their linguistic and general development. The initial membership of the groups varied between 11 and 15. The children live in a Malmö residential area with a large immigrant population. Most of them were born in Sweden or came here when they were very young. Most of their parents have only received elementary education. Roughly half the parents have unskilled jobs, while the remainder are skilled manual workers.

The instructional model for the project comprises a two-year Finnish-speaking pre-school and a two-year junior level (elementary school). The children spent three hours per day in the Finnish-speaking pre-school for two years. A slice of Swedish language instruction was included in the daily programme. In elementary school the Finnish children were integrated with Swedish parallel classes, i.e. in a work team. The Swedish pupils in the project classes received essentially the same instruction as the Swedish pupils in the other classes. The Finnish children on the other hand were taught in both Finnish and Swedish, and their first reading and writing instruction was in Finnish instead of in Swedish. Since the project model was aimed at a transition to regular Swedish instruction at intermediate level (grade 4), the number of Swedish-speaking periods was gradually increased between grades 1 and 3.

Table 1. Comparative time schedule for single-language and bilingual instruction, grades 1-3

	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3	
	SL pupil	BL pupil	SL pupil	BL pupil	SL pupil	BL pupil
	Swedish	Sw. Finn	Swedish	Sw. Finn.	Swedish	Sw.Finn.
SWEDISH	9		11		9	
FINNISH		8		8(7)[xx]		2
FINNISH (aux.)						2
SWEDISH (aux.)		1		3(4)[xx]		5
MATHEMATICS	4	4 (2)[x]	4	4	5	5
ENGLISH					2	2
GENERAL SUBJ'S	5	3 2	6	4 2	7	2 5
P.E.	1	1	2	2	3	3
MUSIC	1	1	1	1	2	1 1
HANDICRAFT					2	2
TOTAL	20	10 + 10 = 20	24	14 + 10 = 24	30	20 + 10 = 30

(x) Parallel instruction in Swedish class
(xx) Ppw, another 1 ppw Swedish aux., taken from Finnish
SL = single-language, BL = bilingual

The project work team comprised about 45 pupils, 20-25 of them immigrant children. The large proportion of immigrant children was due to the many immigrant families living in this part of Malmö. Between 5 and 15 of the immigrant children were Finnish. Thus about half the pupils in the classes were Swedish.

The teaching group for a work team comprised two Swedish class teachers, who were responsible for a parallel class each, a Finnish teacher, who was in charge of Finnish teaching, and an immigrant teacher to teach the immigrant children Swedish. In addition to these teachers, certain pupils had access to remedial teachers on the normal basis and - in the case of non-Finnish immigrant pupils - to home language teachers. This teacher density does not deviate from the normal resource allocation in schools. The only deviation which occurred was that the home language practice periods for all the Finnish immigrant pupils were run together and the children were assembled in a singel group and allotted their own Finnish teacher and an extra classroom for their Finnish periods.

The bilingual instructional model applied at junior level can be said to comprise the following three instructional forms:

- regular Swedish-speaking instruction, with the Finnish children taking part in Swedish-speaking instruction together with the other members of the class,

- co-ordinated instruction in first languages and to some extent in general subjects as well, Swedish and Finnish pupils being taught Swedish and Finnish respectively by separate teachers in separate classrooms,

- composite instruction in mathematics and general subjects, the children being mainly taught in Swedish together with the rest of the class, but with some terms being explained in Finnish by the Finnish teacher. A similar form of instruction with two teachers in the same class is sometimes practised in Swedish schools and referred to as a dual or escort teacher system.

The data continuously collected in the course of the project comprise Finnish and Swedish school and language tests and ability tests, teacher observations and interviews of parents. Many of the tests were also given to the Swedish and other (immigrant) classmates of the children taking part in the project.

THE SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FINNISH CHILDREN TAKING PART IN THE PROJECT COMPARED WITH THOSE OF OTHER PUPIL GROUPS

In order to evaluate the effect of the project teaching model and discuss the future prospects of the Finnish children in the Swedish school system and in working life, we compared their school achievements with the proficiency level of other relevant pupil groups. Thus the children taking part in the project were compared with the norm groups for the tests employed, with other Finnish immigrant children in Sweden, with other members of their classes and with other children living in the same residential area.

The school achievements of the Finnish children compared with those of the norm groups comprising Swedish children in Sweden and Finnish children in Finland

The Swedish language proficiency of the Finnish junior level children taking part in the project is roughly one S.D. below the normative average for Swedish children of the same age. It should be noted that the Finnish children learned to read and write in Finnish as per the project model, so that they received less Swedish language instruction than their classmates.

The mathematics achievement of the Finnish children in the various grades of junior level is slightly below the average for the Swedish norm group. The project children's mathematics proficiency is much the same irrespective of whether their mathematical

skills are tested in Finnish or Swedish.

The project children's command of their first language, both at pre-school level an in grades 1-4 of elementary school, is roughly one S.D. below the average for single-language Finnish children in Finland. It should be pointed out that the curriculum an time allocation at junior level are not the same in Finland and Sweden, which somewhat impedes direct comparisons of school achievements between the two countries

An investiga ion of the development of the project children's level of proficiency in Finnish from year to year reveals that they have retained approximately the same relative level compared to children of the same age in Finland. This means that their knowledge of their first language has developed all the time. It is true that their average level of proficiency is lower than that of the norm group "Finnish children in Finland", but their development proceeds at a normal speed.

Comparisons of the school achievements of the Finnish children in the project and other Finnish immigrant children in Sweden

There are certain limited possibilites of comparing the school achievements of the Finnish children taking part in the project with the achievements of other Finnish immigrant children, since Lasonen (1978) has studied the educational performance of Finnish immigrant children at the junior level of elementary school, comparing the test scores of Finnish children taught in Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking classes respectively. Unfortunately Lasonen did not test the Finnish children's proficiency in the Swedish language.

The tests indicate that the Finnish children taking part in the project have a somewhat better command of their first language in grades 1 and 2 than other Finnish immigrant children in Sweden. This may be due to the Finnish language training which the

project children received in their two years of Finnish-speaking pre-school education. In grade 3, the project children - who have been given parallel instruction in Swedish and Finnish - and the Finnish children taught in their first language in Finnish-speaking classes appear to have much the same command of Finnish. On the other hand the Finnish children taught entirely in Swedish during the junior level grades fared appreciably worse in all tests than the children taught in Finnish. The proficiency gap is most clearly apparent in the "grammar gaps" sub-test, designed to measure knowledge of Finnish grammar, i.e. of the basic structures of the language.

The Finnish children who were taught to read and write in their first language (i.e. the project children) and children who have attended Finnish classes appear to have much the same command of Finnish vocabulary, reading and writing, whereas children who have not received any instruction in their first language, i.e. children who have attended Swedish-speaking classes, perform less well in these respects. Judging by the Lukila tests, mathematics proficiency is more similar in the three groups than language proficiency.

Comparisons between the project children and their classmates

The project classes comprised roughly equal proportions of Swedish pupils and pupils with other first languages than Swedish. The proportion of Finnish children varied from one class to another. The Finnish pupils were given parallel instruction in Finnish and Swedish according to the project model, while the other non-Swedish pupils were taught together with the Swedish pupils in Swedish.

The test results show that the Finnish children's performance in Swedish in grade 1 is slightly inferior to that of their classmates. In grades 2 and 3 their achievements are on a level with those of the immigrant children taught in Swedish. The Swedish children are not much better at Swedish in grade 3 than their

non-Swedish classmates. The school achievements of the Finnish and Swedish pupils in the class are comparable according to the mathematics tests and school reports. The other non-Swedish pupils are somewhat weaker. School achievements in grade 3 are illustrated in the table below.

Table 2. Comparisons of the school achievements of various groups in the grade 3 project classes

Subject	Finnish children	Other non-Swedish children	Swedish children
	av.mark	av.mark	av.mark
Swedish standardized achievement test (7 sub-tests)	1.9	1.9	2.3
Mathematics standardized achievement test (3 sub-tests)	2.5	2.2	2.4
Swedish	2.7	2.4	2.9
Mathematics	2.9	2.7	2.8
Music	3.1	2.7	3.0
P.E.	3.4	3.0	3.0
General subjects	3.1	2.5	3.1
Home (i.e. first) language	3.3	3.5	
	N=32-32	N=29-46	N=33-62

Comparisons of different groups of children from the same residential area

The "children from the same residential area" reference group comprises children of the same age as the project children who are attending a different class and/or school but come from the same residential area. This group includes both Swedish children and children with first languages other than Swedish (Finnish children among them).

Table 3. Grade 3 standardized achievement test results in neighbouring schools in 1976, 1978 and 1979

Swedish standardized achievement tests (grade 3):						
	Whole class		Non-Swedish pupils		Swedish pupils	
	N	av. marks	N	av. marks	N	av. marks
1976 (10 classes)	233	2,0	73	1,7	160	2,2
1978 (6 classes)	121	1,8	70	1,7	51	1,9
1979 (3 classes)	55	1,9	32	2,0	23	1,9
Mathematics standardized achievement test (grade 3):						
	Whole class		Non-Swedish pupils		Swedish pupils	
	N	av. marks	N	av. marks	N	av. marks
1976 (10 classes)	231	2,0	71	1,8	160	2,2
1978 (6 classes)	119	1,9	68	2,0	51	1,8
1979 (3 classes)	54	2,4	30	2,7	24	2,1

As can be seen from the above table of Swedish and mathematics test results, the pupils in the project area fell short of the average mark of 3 in the standardized achievement tests. Their scores are clearly below the Swedish average, irrespective of whether their first language is Swedish or another language.

One's first impulse is to attribute the low test scores to the children's social background. Rosengård is a typical low status area inhabited almost exclusively by families from the lowest social classes. Since the great majority of immigrant children come from social class III, their relatively low level of school achievement is perhaps due more to factors connected with social status than to their belonging to an immigrant group or not having Swedish as their first language.

Summing up, we may note that the school achievements of the Finnish children taking part in the project are on a level with those of their Swedish classmates and that their grade 3 level

of proficiency in the Swedish language is practically the same as that of comparable Swedish pupils. The Finnish project children have a command of their first language roughly one S.D. below that of the "Finnish children in Finland" reference group. There would probably have been less difference, however, if it had been possible to compare the project children's Finnish language proficiency with that of children from similar social conditions in Finland. Thus we believe that the majority of the children taking part in the project have a fair chance of coping well with Finnish language situations and that they have a good potential for continuing to develop their command of their first language.

After having followed the progress of the four groups of Finnish children through the project instructional model for four years, we have found that the model works well in the practical context and that it has enhanced the prospects of the Finnish pupils becoming functionally bilingual.

Connections between the project children's school achievements and background variables

In order to study the connections between the pupil's home backgrounds and their school achievements, correlation-analyses were undertaken of data obtained from parental interviews and school achievements in grade 3. At the same time a study was made of the connection between the ability result obtained initially and school achievements. Although the group investigated can be termed highly homogeneous, the analyses show connections between the children's school achievements and their intellectual aptitudes, parental socio-economic status, the network of social contacts possessed by the children and their families, and the length of time they have resided in Sweden. Swedish language development does not appear to have been negatively influenced by the Finnish language instruction.

In order to see whether the children's school achievement could be better explained by simultaneously using several variable from their background descriptions, an analysis was undertaken in which use was primarily made of variables from the parental interview. The children's proficiency in the Finnish language could be predicted fairly well on the strength of the ability test and a few background variables concerning the social situation of the family. There is a negative correlation between the pupil's first-language performance and the length of time the family has been in Sweden, and there is positive correlation between first-language performance, socio-economic status and intellectual ability. Addition of the two Swedish tests in grade 1 to the predictors made it possible to predict the children's school achievement in grade 3 as well. Swedish language proficiency also proved to be a very good predictor of Finnish language proficiency and of teacher ratings of the pupils' self-confidence and intellectual maturity in grade 3. Children with good aptitudes and a socially stimulating background environment develop better, learn Swedish early, become proficient in their first language, are self-confident and do well at school.

Correlation-analyses of first-language proficiency and school achievements led to the conclusion that factors such as ability and the socio-economic status of the family during the junior level grades have an increasingly important bearing on the development of both and second language, and that the children's early command of their first language is not directly related to their Swedish language performance in grade 3. Since teacher ratings of the children's characteristics were included in the analyses, it could also be established that children with a good command of their first language were highly self-confident in Finnish language situations and, similarly, that children with a good command of Swedish were highly self-confident in Swedish language situations. Thus children need to know both their first language and Swedish in order to feel secure in their bilingual living environment.

The following are the main conclusions which we venture to draw from the findings which have now been presented concerning the language proficiency and school achievements of immigrant children

and on the strength of the analyses presented in the final report on the project (Löfgren & Ouvinen-Birgerstam 1980):

- The bilingual instructional model evolved in the project has increased the prospects of the Finnish pupils becoming functionally bilingual.

- The identity of the children's first language is not in itself a crucial factor in their educational achievement in Swedish schools.

- The children's social environment and background and their intellectual ability do more than purely linguistic factors to determine their success at school.

- The development by immigrant children of proficiency in Swedish is not a direct result of their level of first-language proficiency.

- Instruction in the first language has not had a negative effect on the children's command of Swedish.

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